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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

BRIEFING PAPER

EXCISE (82)

TRANSITION PAPER

GLOBAL NEGOTIATIONS

The Issue

In December 1979, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to prepare and then launch a new round of Global Negotiations (GN), to begin in early 1981. The concept behind GN is to create a UN forum and structure to consider in an integrated manner major international economic issues, such as trade, energy, raw materials, development, and money and finance, as well as related institutional questions. The preparations for these negotiations, which are currently the focal point of the North/South dialogue, have been underway for almost a year. However, the 11th UN Special Session on Development, which met from August 25 through September 15, proved unable to reach agreement on either procedures or agenda.

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From the time the original UNGA resolution was adopted, the U.S. has insisted on protection for the autonomy, authority and responsibility of the specialized agencies and on decentralizing the substantive negotiations to these agencies. Most other industrialized countries share our substantive concern on this issue, but they believe that the requirement for consensus in the procedures text would afford adequate protection.

The consensus provision would allow any country, if it is willing to stand alone, to block an unacceptable decision on a substantive issue or an instruction to a specialized agency. But we have maintained that consensus alone will not prevent substantive negotiations in New York on issues within the mandate of other bodies. Thus, we are insisting on more explicit protective language on this issue in the procedures themselves. The GN agenda was not discussed in the Special Session because the developing countries insisted that the procedural issue be resolved first.

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The UNGA Regular Session opened on September 16 and is now expected to conclude during the week before Christmas. Early in the session, UNGA President Baron von Wechmar (FRG) organized an informal body known as "Friends of the President," consisting of approximately twenty representatives of developed and developing countries. As a result of their deliberations, von Wechmar has produced a new procedural text and an agenda--to which no government is yet committed; they are currently under discussion in the General Assembly.

Timing

Senior officials in the Administration are currently giving intensive consideration to the procedures document developed by the "Friends of the President." A decision is required now on this issue. The negotiations on agenda are expected to continue for some time. If agreement is reached in the UN General Assembly, actual Global Negotiations could commence in January 1981, in accordance with the original schedule. If agreement is not reached in the UNGA, it is probable that negotiations on agenda and procedures will begin again in New York during January.

U.S. Policy

The U.S. believes Global Negotiations, if properly structured, could be a useful component to our overall North/South policy. Besides the general educative purpose they would serve, we would try to use the GN to gain international consensus to concentrate North/South efforts in the future on key areas, such as food, energy, population, and recycling where progress is necessary and possible. But the G-77 leadership is disinclined to concentrate the work on the areas we think most beneficial. They also will press their demands--as they do elsewhere--for structural changes we cannot accept. But our key concern is to ensure that Global Negotiations, if launched, would not weaken the technical and functional agencies that are making a real contribution to global economic stability and development of developing countries.

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